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ORGANIZING FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
AND THE
NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY PROCESS

STUDY

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY
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FOREWORD

The Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery has been making a nonpartisan study of how our government can best organize to develop and execute national security policy. This is the third in a series of staff reports being issued by the Subcommittee.

The most important task of the new President will be to provide for the safety of the nation and the preservation of individual liberty. To survive and flourish, our free society requires a strategy which will effectively marshal and employ our strength and guide our efforts to defend freedom and build an enduring world community.

The Secretary of State is the President's senior adviser on foreign policy and his chief agent in executing that policy. The role of the Secretary of State in the policy process has therefore received major attention in the Subcommittee study.

The Subcommittee has published detailed testimony on the office of the Secretary of State given by Robert A. Lovett, Christian A. Herter, W. Averell Harriman, George F. Kennan, Paul H. Nitze, Robert Bowie, James A. Perkins, Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller and others. It has sought the counsel of dozens of past and present officials and students of the policy process.

Drawing on this testimony and counsel, this staff report makes certain suggestions which may aid the new Secretary of State in fulfilling his critical tasks as adviser and executive.

HENRY M. JACKSON,

Chairman, Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery.

JANUARY 28, 1961.

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THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY PROCESS

THE PRESIDENT'S PROBLEM

Traditionally, Presidents have turned to the Secretary of State for their principal help in initiating and executing foreign policy. However, the breadth and complexity of foreign policy today, together with departmental fragmentation of responsibility for dealing with it, have created certain new problems for the President and also for the Secretary.

The means for meeting our foreign policy objectives now go far beyond those of traditional diplomacy. They embrace economic and military aid, scientific and technical assistance, information programs, surplus food programs, and educational and cultural exchange. They involve work through alliances and international organizations—with all the attendant complications. We have mutual defense treaties with 42 nations; we are members of four regional defense organizations and an active participant in a fifth; we belong to the United Nations and some two dozen other major international organizations.

Both in its making and execution, moreover, foreign policy has become interdepartmental. Not only the Department of State but the Department of Defense and the military services, Treasury, Commerce, Interior, Agriculture, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Federal Communications Commission, the Export-Import Bank, the Development Loan Fund, and more than a score of other agencies are all deeply involved in international activities.

This situation has provided fertile soil for the exuberant growth of inter-agency coordinating committees. These include the complex committee substructure of the National Security Council and the multitude of formal coordinating groups operating outside the NSC system. Rival claimants from different executive departments with different missions are introduced into the policy process, requiring power to be shared even though responsibility may not be.

Mr. Robert Lovett calls this the "foulup factor" in our methods. He told the Subcommittee:

* * * the idea seems to have got around that just because some decision may affect your activities, you automatically have a right to take part in making it * * * there is some reason to feel that the doctrine may be getting out of hand and that what was designed to act as a policeman may, in fact, become a jailor.

In operation, coordinating committee mechanisms have proved to have severe limitations, and they have exacted a heavy price in terms of loss of individual responsibility, excessive compromise, and general administrative sluggishness.

The magnitude and persistence of these difficulties have led many people to believe that the remedy lies in some radical organizational change—a grand council of “wise men,” a new cold war strategy board, a “super-Cabinet” First Secretary, or a “superstaff” agency in the White House. The appeal of some quick solution is understandable—if one could be found. But such novel additions to the policy process, far from reducing the President’s burdens, would in all likelihood increase them.

For example, the evidence is strong that the President’s difficulties would not be eased by creating a new super-Cabinet official or a “superstaff” White House agency for national security. It is highly probable that such “above-the-departments” devices would not solve the problems that they are supposed to solve, and would indeed create new and onerous problems in their place.¹

The President’s best hope lies along another path—strengthening the traditional means of executive power.

In the American system, there is no satisfactory alternative to primary reliance on the great departments, and their vast resources of experience and talent, as instruments for policy development and execution. At the same time, there is no satisfactory substitute for the budgetary process and the staff work of presidential aides as instruments for pulling departmental programs together into a truly presidential program, for prodding the departments when necessary, and for checking on their performance.

The President’s problem is to invigorate both sets of instruments of executive power, and a strong President will want strength in both.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND THE AMERICAN SYSTEM

Sought-for improvements in the national security policy process must give major attention to the role of the Secretary of State and his department.

In the American system of government, the Secretary occupies a unique position. He is the ranking member of the Cabinet for purposes of protocol. But he is also “first among equals” in a deeper sense.

Of the Cabinet officials, only the Secretary of State is primarily charged with looking at our nation as a whole in its relation to the outside world. His perspective, like that of the President’s, is essentially political-strategic. Together with the President, the Secretary of State speaks and acts for the priority of national political policy over lesser considerations and goals. As Mr. Dean Acheson has said:

Foreign policy is the whole of national policy looked at from the point of view of the exigencies created by “the vast external realm” beyond our borders. It is not a “jurisdiction.” It is an orientation, a point of view, a measurement of values—today, perhaps, the most important one for national survival.

It is in the nature of foreign policy, and today more so than ever before, that the Secretary must seek help from other parts of the government for most of the things he wants to accomplish. He

¹ See two earlier Subcommittee staff reports: *Super-Cabinet Officers and Superstaffs* (November 1960) and *The National Security Council* (December 1960).

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needs the help of the President's own aides and his Cabinet colleagues—from Defense, Treasury, Agriculture and the like. But the Secretary's authority to command—his power to direct, discipline and reward—is confined to his own department. In dealing with others, he can only request, and try to guide and influence.

The success of a Secretary in influencing his colleagues is directly related to the President's confidence in him and reliance on him. When the President confides his thoughts to him, seeks his counsel, and uses him, the Secretary can be strong and helpful in shaping the course of national policy as the President wishes it shaped. A Secretary who lacks this relationship is soon neglected by his Cabinet associates and cannot provide detailed, day-to-day guidance of national policy. Nor can the President—much less a White House aide—readily or fully assume the role which he has made it impossible for the Secretary to perform for him.

The Secretary must, of course, be deserving of the President's confidence and show that he is the official best able to help the President on foreign policy problems. He, aided by his department, must be willing and ready to assert his proper jurisdiction and exercise full leadership across the whole front of national security matters, as they relate to foreign policy. He must earn the role of first adviser by being the President's first helper.

The new Secretary faces these major problems:

First: He must establish working relations with other parts of the government which fortify him as foreign policy leader.

Second: He must secure talent and resources necessary to deal with the problems of foreign policy in their full contemporary context.

Third: He must take steps to assure his availability in Washington to the President, the Congress, and his department.

THE CENTRAL PARTNERSHIP—STATE AND DEFENSE

The Secretaries of State and Defense are the Cabinet officials most concerned with the government programs which must rank highest on any list of national priorities. They speak for the requirements of national safety and survival.

Today, perhaps the most important problems of national security are joint State-Defense problems, requiring joint action by the two departments for their solution. These range from the development and execution of military aid programs, the negotiation of base rights, and arms control planning, through the overriding problem of properly relating military means with foreign policy ends.

Yet cooperation between State and Defense has not always been close. Typically, Defense lacks confidence in State's handling of military matters, and feels it cannot get precise enough long-term political guidance. State, commonly, deplores the Pentagon's inability to speak with one voice on strategic doctrine. The diplomat may regard the soldier's approach to planning mechanistic, while the soldier thinks the diplomat an improviser and a hunch-player.

Despite the deep-seated differences of tradition and outlook which have stood between the Pentagon and Foggy Bottom, a full and sympathetic partnership between State and Defense is critical to achieving our national security goals.

Almost every day, the Secretary of State confronts some diplomatic problem requiring knowledge of our present military strength and its deployment. Also, in looking ahead, he must gear his political-strategic planning to the evolution of our own military forces, the prospective capabilities of our adversaries, and the broad direction of weapons developments in the offing. On the other hand, the planning of the Secretary of Defense and his military chiefs must reflect an appreciation of our foreign policy problems, commitments and goals.

The partnership of State and Defense must obtain at all levels. Nowhere is it more important than in the lower departmental echelons, where the critical initial work on planning takes place. The need is for continuing staff work across the Potomac, between people who can think both in foreign policy and military terms, and relate each to the other.

The partnership will be still-born unless the two Secretaries themselves set its tone and style. They need frequent and unhurried opportunities to talk together, think together, and plan together.

The Budgetary Process

It is in the budgetary process that some of our most important policy goals are translated into concrete action-oriented decisions. The Secretary of State need not and should not concern himself with the budgetary details of the military establishment. Yet the Pentagon should have, at budget preparation time, his views on underlying political-strategic assumptions and on the relationship of proposed force levels and weapons systems to our foreign policy problems.

Moreover, the counsel of the two Secretaries should be sought by the President at the target-setting stage in the annual budgetary cycle—before the initial over-all budgetary ceiling is established. And this consultation should be more than *pro forma*. Otherwise, subsequent budgetary planning will fail to reflect the two Secretaries' informed perspectives and their best judgments about the magnitude and nature of emerging national security problems, and the shape and size of programs required to meet them.

THE SECRETARY AND INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEES

The Secretary's ability to exert foreign policy leadership is closely related to the way in which interdepartmental committees are organized and handled.

Inter-agency committees are the gray and bloodless ground of bureaucratic warfare—a warfare of position, not of decisive battles. State commonly sees them as devices for bringing “outsiders” into matters it regards as its own, and resists encroachment. The other departments and agencies use them as instruments for “getting into the act.”

“Control or divert” is State's guiding strategic principle. When it cannot gain the upper hand, it tries to occupy committees with “busy work,” while getting key decisions through informal bargaining with its adversaries or directly from the President. One clear illustration lies in the Operations Coordinating Board of the National Security Council.

The strategy has not been wholly successful, and over the years State has given ground.

In some cases the chairmanship of foreign policy committees has gone to other agencies. The National Advisory Council on International Monetary and Financial Problems is one example. As a statutory matter, it is chaired and staffed by Treasury—not State. Another example is the Trade Policy Committee. It is chaired by Commerce.

On other committees, State may sit as one among equals though it is mainly responsible for solving the issue in question. The price paid for committee agreement may be heavy in terms of policy compromised, time wasted, and decisions deferred. Filtered through committees, the Secretary's voice becomes muted, his words blurred. His responsibilities to the President remain, but his power and authority to exercise them diminish.

Committee Killing

A very high percentage of committees serve no useful purpose. Or else, performing a necessary service in the beginning, they live on long after their reason for being has ended.

Mr. Averell Harriman has suggested the possibility of a "committee-killing outfit," charged with regularly reviewing the need for the continued existence of particular committees and identifying those which merit extinction. The Bureau of the Budget might properly give this task higher priority.

The Management of Committees

Where interdepartmental committees are necessary, the problem is this: How to manage them so that the political-strategic leadership of the Secretary of State on foreign policy matters is strengthened? And how to administer them so that the legitimate concerns of other departments are brought to bear without excessive dilution and delay?

Certain administrative reforms can be helpful.

First: The Department of State should in most cases chair interdepartmental committees working on problems with a heavy foreign policy component. If jurisdiction is more or less evenly divided with other departments, doubts should be resolved in favor of State.

Second: Committee chairmen should be given more responsibility for decision and action. The possible suppression of opposing views by a strong chairman is far less dangerous than the disappearance of any coherent view at all into a quicksand of generalities under the rule of *liberum veto*. Members of committees should serve in an advisory capacity to the chairman, whose final conclusions and recommendations should be his own. The members should of course have full opportunity to present their point of view. They should be free also, if they so desire, to file dissenting comment or appeal the chairman's recommendations to higher authority.

Committee chairmen and members should be in a direct line of responsibility to their department or agency chiefs so their recommendations and views can enter the main stream of policy.

Third: A single department, more often than not State, should be responsible for directing the execution of foreign policy decisions, by delegation from the President, even if several departments must take part in their execution. Where joint action is required, it is almost always preferable to put one action officer, from one department, in charge, leaving other agencies free to appeal his decisions.

Fourth: Greater use should be made of informal joint working groups in the first stages of developing foreign policy initiatives. These should normally be chaired by someone from State. Such groups can be formed to deal with particular problems, and their members should be hand picked accordingly. The participants, when they serve as individuals rather than formal agency representatives, are less bound by departmental party lines, and their recommendations are more likely to reflect fresh viewpoints and their own best estimate of desirable courses of action.

THE SECRETARY AND KEY NATIONAL SECURITY POSTS

As foreign policy leader, the Secretary of State requires the presence, both in his own department and other parts of the government, of more top-level officials who can deal with national security problems "in the round." Some of these officials will be citizens drawn from private life; others will come from the career services.

Today, those career services are not well prepared to give senior officials the kind of training and job experiences needed for a broad grasp of national security problems.

In terms of their own needs, the armed services have done far better. They have recognized the requirement for military generalists. The career patterns followed by promising officers expose them to the problems of their service as a whole. And today, attendance at the National War College or its equivalent, together with a tour of duty in a joint or international command, is virtually required of those reaching general officer rank.

No comparable effort is now made—in State, Defense or elsewhere—to give civilian officials correspondingly wide backgrounds of training and experience. The situation requires correction.

The typical civilian official spends almost his entire career working for one agency. Even then, he has few chances to see its problems as a whole. In contrast with the military services, civilian officials have only limited opportunities for advanced training.

Easier Inter-Agency Transfer

Many of the most effective senior officials in government today have gained invaluable experience by serving in two or more departments and agencies during their careers. Yet personnel regulations do not encourage lateral transfers between agencies, even when such a transfer is clearly in the national interest. Personnel practices which inhibit such transfers need review and revision to meet present needs.

Job Exchange Programs

Another path of reform lies in exchange arrangements giving officials in one department opportunities to work in another. A pilot program has just been started for the interchange of outstanding civilians and military personnel between the Departments of State and Defense. This program was outlined first before the Subcommittee last summer by the then Secretary of State Hexter. Under it, State Department officials will be given job assignments in Defense. In return, Pentagon civilians and military officers will undertake tours of duty in State.

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Two steps seem desirable at an early date: Enrolling larger numbers of officials in this exchange program, and broadening its scope to include participation by the Central Intelligence Agency, the Treasury, the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Bureau of the Budget among others.

This exchange program should also be used as a testing laboratory for studying the practicality and desirability of a more formal "joint career service" in the area of national security. The members of such a service, composed of a limited number of civilian officials and military officers of outstanding ability, would follow career patterns specifically designed to acquaint them with a wide range of national security problems. They would receive critical job assignments and training opportunities which sharpened their skills to the utmost.

Training

A program for exchanging personnel between agencies should be accompanied by more aggressive efforts to give greater numbers of civilian officials advanced training in government-sponsored schools and in universities. Mr. Robert Bowie told the Subcommittee:

In a world that is moving as fast as ours, an opportunity to get away from the day-to-day work and try to get perspective on the problems is absolutely indispensable for the top policy jobs.

The need can be met in part by increased enrollment of first-rate civilians from Defense, State, and other agencies in the National War College and the other service schools. Conversely, larger numbers of military officers might attend the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of State.

The Foreign Service Institute, however, was long a poor relation of the Department of State, and it is not yet funded, supported or staffed on a basis comparable to the service schools. Its programs and curricula need prompt review aimed at setting high standards for the students and expecting high performance.

To perform their jobs properly, increasing numbers of civilian officials must become masters in depth of specialized problem areas. This need can be met by sending more officials of outstanding promise to universities and other study centers.

THE SECRETARY AND HIS STAFF

To take the lead in developing and executing foreign policy, the Secretary of State needs the help of a department with staff resources which span the full range of his problems.

Today, the Secretary's staff is built around the diplomat—whose skills and perspectives are indispensable. But the skills the Secretary must draw upon today, like his problems, go far beyond those traditionally associated with the practice of diplomacy—representation, negotiating, and reporting.

His need for stronger staff and line assistance is most pronounced in these areas:

Executive Managers

Too few State Department officials now possess the background and experience required for executive tasks. Increasingly, the adminis-

tration of foreign policy is "big business," which must be run by skillful administrators. This is especially true of today's ambassadors, who may lead "country teams" composed of hundreds of representatives from numerous agencies and the armed services. The management abilities needed can be found both among able and experienced men from private life and among career officials from the Foreign Service and the other career services.

Specialists

The integration of the departmental and foreign services, undertaken in 1954, desirable though it may have been in some respects, made the department a less congenial home for specialists.

State does not require large staffs of "house technicians" in every narrow specialty bearing upon foreign policy. But the Secretary does need, in his own family, more first rate experts in economics, science and technology, intelligence, and military matters who can interpret their specialties in terms of his needs.

Career management patterns should permit specialists to pursue long-term careers within their own fields, and give them greater incentives and rewards for excellence than they now enjoy.

Military and technical competence

State's need for broadened staff competence is perhaps most acute in the area of military and scientific-technical problems.

The Secretary needs, close at hand at the top-level of the department, a small number of civilians charged with bridging his problems and those of the Pentagon, and able to give him expert counsel on political-military problems.

So, also, the department must move fast to reach a higher level of technical competence required to deal with the problems of arms control, space and other questions with complex political-technical relationships.

The Policy Planning Staff

A better planning effort is needed in State. What Mr. Dean Acheson has called "the thundering present" necessarily occupies the department's main energies, though "the true problem lies in determining the emerging future and the policy appropriate to it."

The creation of the Policy Planning Staff by General George C. Marshall in 1947 was an important and long overdue step to provide the Secretary with advice on long-range trends. In a department as large as State, there is surely room for a few experienced persons to reflect upon the direction of existing policy, question assumptions, raise a critical voice, and recommend new departures.

If competently manned to take into account the entire range of the problems of our foreign relations, the Planning Staff can give the Secretary continuing counsel on basic strategic policy not likely to be provided by other parts of the department.

Help from the Outside

Particularly in the case of long-range problems only now appearing on the horizon, the Secretary of State needs study in depth of a kind difficult to secure even from a strengthened and broadened departmental staff. The time has come for him to get more help from the outside.

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There are a number of alternative ways of "contracting out" for this help. These include closer and fuller relations between State and such going organizations as the Institute of Defense Analyses, creating a "State Department RAND," establishing a new organization to conduct policy research for State and other parts of the government, or else strengthening and making greater use of research centers and universities throughout the nation.

The question of how State can best meet its need on a long-term basis deserves early attention. In the meanwhile, however, the department can revitalize its own Bureau of Intelligence and Research and take fuller advantage of universities and existing study and research centers.

THE SECRETARY'S AVAILABILITY IN WASHINGTON

Much of the effectiveness of the Secretary of State depends upon his being in Washington, on hand for advising the President, leading his department, and consulting with the Congress.

Recent Secretaries of State have been away from their home base much of the time, attending international meetings abroad. The trend toward frequent high level meetings, the formation of the United Nations and regional defense organizations, protracted negotiations like those on arms control --all have exerted upon the Secretary of State a magnetic pull away from his desk.

Ways must be found to relieve the Secretary of State of part of these travel and negotiating burdens.

The stage has been set for improvement by the new Secretary's statement that it is the President's intention and his:

* * * to use freely the diplomatic channel for informal as well as formal discussions and consultations with other governments.

Ambassadors-at-Large and Special Representatives

One promising step lies in greater use of ambassadors-at-large, who can represent the President and the Secretary at high level international meetings. One such official has already been named by the new administration; others may well be needed.

Another useful instrument would be a reserve of special representatives who possess particular competence in specialized problems of emerging international importance. Arms control is one example; space is another. Distinguished citizens who have represented our nation in past negotiations can serve as the cadre of such a reserve. The reserve should be large enough and seasoned enough to permit quick and flexible employment as problems arise. The standing of such representatives is all important; their professional reputations must command respect at home and abroad and they should obviously enjoy the trust of the President and the Secretary.

An International Protocol Conference

The protocol of present day diplomacy, established at the Congress of Vienna, held almost 150 years ago, contributes both to drawing the Secretary away from Washington and to involving him in time-consuming ceremonial duties. Existing protocol practice requires that the Secretary of State himself represent our nation at many

international meetings. It also burdens him with many official social obligations—giving and attending receptions, greeting foreign visitors and the like.

A lightening of this load requires international action, with nations subscribing to a new set of protocol rules. Mr. Robert Lovett proposed to the Subcommittee that an international conference be held to update protocol regulations, especially those regarding the level of representation required at international meetings. Former Secretary of State Herter later made a similar proposal.

Out of such a conference might come an agreement that the Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries of State, ambassadors-at-large or special representatives, together with their foreign counterparts, could play larger roles in representing their nations at high level meetings. Similarly, the conference might agree on rules which drastically reduced protocol-type entertaining when high government officials travel abroad.

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